

## Thomas Jefferson, March 4, 1801, Draft of First Inaugural, The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

### INAUGURAL ADDRESS<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is the first draft, but it differs so little from the address as delivered that it does not seem necessary to print the latter also. In the Jefferson MSS. is the following, which I take to be a paragraph jotted down for the inaugural address, but for some reason not included.

“Wherever there are men there will be parties & wherever there are free men they will make themselves heard. Those of firm health & spirits are unwilling to cede more of their liberty than is necessary to preserve order, those of feeble constns will wish to see one strong arm able to protect them from the many. These are the whigs and tories of nature. These mutual jealousies produce mutual security: and while the laws shall be obeyed all will be safe. He alone is your enemy who disobeys them. In all cases of danger or commotion learn to consider the laws as the standard to which you are to rally. If you find there your officers civil and military, go with them to the establishmt of order. If you find them not there, they are out of their place and must be brot back to the laws. Let this then be the distinctive mark of an American that in cases of commotion he enlists himself under no man's banner, enquires for no man's name but repairs to the standard of the laws. Do this & you need never fear anarchy or tyranny. Your gov?t will be perpetual.”

[March 4, 1801]

Friends & fellow citizens

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Called upon to undertake the duties of the first Executive office of our country, I avail myself of the presence of that portion of my fellow citizens which is here assembled to express my grateful thanks for the favor with which they have been pleased to look towards me, to declare a sincere consciousness that the task is above my talents, & that I approach it with your anxieties & awful presentiments, which your greatness of your charge, & your weakness of my powers so justly inspire.

A rising nation spread over a wide & fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry, engaged in commerce with nations who feel power and forget right, advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye; when I contemplate these transcendent objects, & see the honor, the happiness, & the hopes of this beloved country committed to the issue & the auspices of this day, I shrink from the contemplation, & humble myself before the magnitude of the undertaking.

Utterly indeed should I despair, did not the presence of many whom I here see, remind me, yet in the other high authorities provided by our constitution, I shall find resources of wisdom, of virtue, & of zeal, on which to rely under all difficulties.

To you then, gentlemen, who are charged with the sovereign functions of legislation, & to those associated with you, I look with encouragement for your guidance & support which may enable us to steer with safety, your vessel in which we're all embarked amidst your conflicting elements of a troubled sea.

During the contest of opinion through which we have passed, the animation of discussions and of exertions, has sometimes worn an aspect which might impose on strangers unused to think freely, & to speak & to write what they think.

But this being now decided by the voice of the nation, enounced according to the rules of the constitution, all will of course arrange themselves under the will of the law, & unite in common efforts for the common good. All too will bear in mind your sacred principle, yet your own will of your Majority is in all cases to prevail, that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable: that

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the Minority possess yr equal rights, wch equal laws must protect, & to violate would be oppression.

Let us then, fellow citizens, unite with one heart & one mind; let us restore to social intercourse that harmony & affection, without which Liberty, & even Life itself, are but dreary things.

And let us reflect that havg banishd frm our land yt religious intolce undr wch mankind so long bled & suffered we hve yet gaind little, if we countence a politicl intolrce, as despotc as wickd & capable of

as bitter & bloody persecution.

During the throes and convulsions of the antient world, durg the agonisd spasms of infuriatd man, seeking through blood & slaughter his long lost liberty, it was not wonderful that the agitation of the billows should reach even this distant & peaceful shore: that ys shd be more felt & feard by some, & less by others, & shd divide opinions as to measures of safety.

But every difference of opinion, is not a difference of principle. We have called, by different names, brethren of the same principle. We are all republicans: we are all federalists.

If there be any among us who wish to dissolve this union, or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed, as monuments of the safety wth wch error of opinn m b toleratd whre reasn is left free to combat it.

I know indd yt some honest men hve feard yt a republican govmt cann't be strong; yt this govmt is not strong enough. But wd the honest patriot, in the full tide of successfl experiment abandon a govmt wch hs so far kept us free & firm on ye theoretic & visionary fear yt ys govmt, the world's best hope m, by possibilty, want energy to preserve itself?

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I trust not. I believe this, on the contrary, the strongest government on earth.

I believe it the only one where every man, at the call of the law, would fly to the standard of the law; would meet invasions of public order, as his own personal concern.

Some times it is said yt Man cann't be trustd wth ye govmt of himself.—Can he yn be trustd wth ye govmt of others? Or have we found angels in ye form of kings to govern him?—Let History answr this question.

Let us yn pursue wth courage & confidce our own federl & republ princ. our attamt to Union and Representative govmt.

Kindly separated by nature, & a wide ocean, from the exterminating havoc of one quarter of the globe,

Too high-minded to endure the degradations of the others;

Possessing a chosen country, with room enough for all descendts to the 1,000th & 1,000th generation;

Entertaining a due sense of our equal right, to ye use of our own faculties, to ye acquisitns of our own industry, to honr & confidce frm our fel. cit. resultg nt from birth, but frm our actions & their sense of them, enlightnd by a benign religion, profesd indeed & practiced in various forms, yet all of ym inculcatg honesty, truth, temperce gratitude, & the love of man, acknolegg & adoring an overruling providence, which by all it's dispensations proves that it delights in the happiness of man here, & his greater happiness hereafter:

With all these blessings, what more is

necessary to make us a happy and a prosperous people? Still one thing more, fel. cit. a wise & frugl govmt, wch shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them

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otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry & improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned.

This is the sum of good govmt, & this is necessary to close the circle of our felicities.

About to enter fel. cit. on the exercise of duties, which comprehend everything dear & valuable to you, it is proper you should understand what I deem the essential principle of this govmt and consequently those which ought to shape it's administration.

I will compress them in ye narrowst compass y will bear, statg the genl principle, but not all it's limitations.

Equal & exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political:

Peace, commerce, & honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none:

The support of the State govmts in all their rights, as ye most competent admns for our domestic concerns, and the surest bulwarks against anti republican tendencies:

The preservn of the Genl govmt, in it's whole constnal vigor, as ye sheet anchor of our peace at home, & safety abroad.

A jealous care of the right of election by the people, a mild & safe corrective of abuses, wch r loppd by ye sword of revoln, where peaceable remedies are unprovided.

Absolute acquiescence in ye decisns of ye Majorty ye vitl princip. of republics, frm wch is no appeal bt to force, ye vitl princip. & mmedte part of despotism.

A well discipld militia, our best reliance in peace, & for ye first moments of war, till regulars may relieve them: The Supremacy of the Civil over the Military authority:

Economy in public expense, that labor may be lightly burthened:

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The honest paiment of our debts and sacred preservation of the public faith:

Encouragement of Agriculture, & of Commerce as it's handmaid:

The diffusion of information, & arraignmt of all abuses at the bar of the public reason:

Freedom of Religion, freedom of the press, & freedom of Person under the protection of the Hab. corpus: And trial by juries, impartially selected.

These Principles form ye bright constelln wch hs gone before us, & guidd our steps, thro' an age of Revoln and Reformn: The wisdom of our Sages, & blood of our Heroes, have been devoted to their attainment: they should be the Creed of our political faith, the Text of civic instruction, the Touchstone by which to try the services of those we trust; and should we wander from them, in moments of error or alarm, let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to Peace, Liberty & Safety.

I repair then, fellow citizens to the post which you have assigned me.

With experience enough in subordinate stations to know the difficulties of this the greatest of all, I have learnt to expect that it will rarely fall to the lot of imperfect man to retire from this station with the reputation & the favor which bring him into it.

Without pretensions to that high confidce you reposed in our first & greatest revolutionary character whose preeminent services had entitled him to the first place in his country's love, and had destined for him the fairest page in the volume of faithful history, I ask so much confidence only as may give firmness & effect to the legal admn of your affairs.

I shall often go wrong thro' defect of judgment: when right, I shall often be thought wrong by yos whse positns wll nt command a view of the whole ground.

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I ask your indulgence for my own errors, which will never be intentional: & your support agnst the errors of others who may condemn wt they wd nt if seen in all it's parts.

The approbation implied by your suffrage, is a great consolation to me for the past; and my future solicitude will be to retain the good opinion of yos who hve bestowed it in advance, to conciliate that of others, by doing them all the good in my power, and to be instrumental to the happiness & freedom of all.

Relying then on the patronage of your good will, I advance with obedience to the work, ready to retire frm it whenever you become sensible how mch better choice it is in your power to make.

And may that infinite power which rules the destinies of the universe lead our councils to what is best, and give ym a favorable issue for your peace & prosperity.